اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah – 66 At-Tahrim (The Prohibition)

سُوْرَةُ التَّحْرِيْمِ مَدَنِيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكَ ۚ تَبْتَغِيْ مَرْضَاتَ اَزْوَاجِكَ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۱

(66-1) O Prophet, why do you forbid what Allah has made lawful for you? (1) Is it to please your wives? (2) Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate. (3)

(1) This is not, in fact, a question but an expression of disapproval. The object is not to ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) why he had done so, but to warn him that his act to make unlawful for himself what Allah had made lawful is not approved by Allah. This by itself gives the meaning that nobody has the power to make unlawful what Allah has made lawful; so much so that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself also did not possess any such power. Although the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not regard this as unlawful as a matter of faith nor legally but only forbade himself its use, yet since he was not an ordinary man but Allah's Messenger, and his forbidding himself something could have the effect that his followers too would have regarded it as forbidden, or at least reprehensible, or the people of his community might have thought that there was no harm in forbidding oneself something his Allah had made lawful, Allah pointed it out to him and commanded him to refrain from such prohibition.

(2) This shows that in this case the Prophet (peace be upon him) had not made a lawful thing unlawful because of a personal desire but because his wives had wanted him to do so, and he had made it unlawful for himself only in order to please them. Here, the question arises: why has Allah particularly made mention of the

cause of making the thing unlawful besides pointing out the act of prohibition? Obviously, if the object had been to make him refrain from making a lawful thing as unlawful, this could be fulfilled by the first sentences and there was no need that the motive of the act also should have been stated. Making mention of it in particular clearly shows that the object was not to check the Prophet (peace be upon him) only for making a lawful thing as unlawful, but along with that to warn the his wives also to the effect that in their capacity as the Prophet's wives they had not understood their delicate responsibilities and had made the Prophet (peace be upon him) do a thing which could lead to making a lawful thing as unlawful.

Although it has not been mentioned in the Quran as to what it was that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had made forbidden upon himself, yet the traditionists and commentators have mentioned in this regard two different incidents, which occasioned the revelation of this verse. One of these relates to Mariyah Qibiyyah (Mary, the Copt lady) and the other to his forbidding upon himself the use of honey.

The incident relating to Mariyah is that after concluding the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah, one of the letters that the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent to the rulers of the adjoining countries was addressed to the Roman Patriarch of Alexandria also, whom the Arabs called Muqawqis. When Hatib bin Abi Baltaa took this letter to him, he did not embrace Islam but received him well, and in reply wrote: I know that a Prophet is yet to rise, but I think he will appear in Syria. However, I have treated your messenger with due honor, and am sending two slave-girls to you, who command respect among the Coptics. (Ibn Saad). One of those slave-girls was Sirin and the other Mariyah (Mary). On his way back from Egypt, Hatib presented Islam before both and they believed. When they came before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he gave Sirin in the ownership of Hassan bin Thabit and admitted Mariyah into his own household. In Dhil-Hijjah, A.H. 8 she gave birth to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) son, Ibrahim. (Al-Istiab; Al-Isabah). This lady was very beautiful. Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Al-Isabah has related this saying of Aishah about her: No woman's

entry into the Prophet's household vexed me so much as that of Mariyah, because she was very beautiful and pleased him much. Concerning her the story that has been narrated in several ways in the Hadith is briefly as follows:

One day the Prophet (peace be upon him) visited the house of Hafsah when she was not at home. At that time Mariyah came to him there and stayed with him in seclusion. Hafsah took it very ill and complained of it bitterly to him. Thereupon, in order to please her, the Prophet (peace be upon him) vowed that he would have no conjugal relation with Mariyah in future. According to some traditions, he forbade Mariyah for himself, and according to others, he also swore an oath on it. These traditions have been mostly reported by the immediate successors of the companions without mentioning any intermediary link. But some of these have been reported from Umar, Abdullah bin Abbas and Abu Hurairah also. In view of the plurality of the methods of narration, Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari has expressed the view that there is some truth in the story. But in none of the six authentic collections of the Hadith has this story been narrated. In Nasai only this much has been related from Anas: The Prophet (peace be upon him) had a slave-girl with whom he had conjugal relations. Then, Hafsah and Aishah began to point out this to him repeatedly until he forbade her for himself. There upon, Allah sent down this verse: O Prophet, why do you make unlawful that which Allah has made lawful for you.
The other incident has been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai and several other books of Hadith from Aishah herself and its purport is as follows:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) usually paid a daily visit to all his wives after the Asr Prayer. Once it so happened that he began to stay in the house of Zainab bint-Jahsh longer than usual, for she had received some honey from somewhere as a gift and the Prophet was very fond of sweet things; therefore, he would have a drink of honey at her house. Aishah states that she felt envious of this and spoke to Hafsah, Saudah and Safiyyah about it and together they decided that whoever of them was visited by the Prophet, she should say to him: Your mouth smells of

maghafir. Maghafir is a kind of flower, which gives out an offensive smell, and if the bee obtains honey from it, it is also tainted by the same odor. They all knew that the Prophet was a man of very fine taste and he abhorred that he should emit any kind of unpleasant smell. Therefore, this device was contrived to stop him from staying in the house of Zainab and it worked. When several of his wives told him that his mouth smelt of maghafir, he made a promise not to use the honey any longer. In one tradition his words are to the effect: Now, I will never have a drink from it: I have sworn an oath. In another tradition he only said: I will never have a drink from it, and there is no mention of the oath. And in the tradition which Ibn al Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani and Ibn Marduyah have related from Ibn Abbas the words are to the effect: By God, I will not drink it.

Our eminent scholars regard this second version as correct and the first as unreliable. Imam Nasai says: About honey the Hadith reported from Aishah is authentic, and the story of forbidding Mariyah for himself by the Prophet (peace be upon him) has not been narrated in a reliable way. Qadi Iyad says: The truth is that this verse was sent down concerning honey and not Mariyah. Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al- Arabi also regards the story about honey as correct and the same is the opinion of Imam Nawawi and Hafiz Badruddiu Aini. Ibn Humam writes in Fath al-Qadir: The story of the prohibition of honey has been narrated in Bukhari and Muslim from Aishah who was herself a party to it; therefore, it is much more reliable.

Hafiz Ibn Kathir says: The truth is that this verse was sent down about forbidding honey upon himself by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

(3) That is, although the act of making a lawful thing unlawful only in order to please your wives was an act unbecoming of your high and responsible office, yet it was no sin, which might have entailed a punishment. Therefore, Allah has only pointed it out to you and corrected it, and has forgiven you for this error.

قَدۡ فَرَضَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمۡ تَحِلَّةَ أَيۡمَٰنِكُمۡ وَٱللَّهُ مَوۡلَىٰكُمۡ وَهُوَ ٱلۡعَلِيمُ ٱلۡحَكِيمُ ٢

(66-2) Allah has prescribed for you a way for the absolution of your oaths. [4] Allah is your Guardian. He is All-Knowing, Most Wise. [5]

(4) It means: Act according to the method Allah has prescribed for absolution from oaths by expiation in(Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 89)and break your promise that you have made to forbid yourself of a lawful thing. Here, an important legal question arises and it is this: Is this command applicable to the case when a person has forbidden upon himself a lawful thing on oath, or is forbidding oneself a lawful thing by itself tantamount to swearing an oath, whether the words of the oath have been used or not. The jurists in this regard have expressed different opinions:

One section of them says that mere forbidding oneself of a lawful thing is not an oath. If a person without swearing an oath has forbidden upon himself a wife, or some other lawful thing, it is an absurd thing which does not entail any expiation, but he can resume without any expiation the use of the thing that he had forbidden for himself. This is the opinion of Masruq, Shabi, Rabiah and Abu Salamah; and the same view is held by Ibn Jarir and all the Zahiris. According to them forbidding oneself of something would be an oath only in case express words of oath are used when forbidding it for oneself. In this regard, their reasoning is that since the Prophet (peace be upon him) while forbidding himself a lawful thing had also sworn an oath, as has been reported in several traditions, Allah told him to act according to the method that had been appointed for absolving oneself from oaths.
The second group says that to forbid oneself something without using the words of oath is not an oath by itself, but the case of the wife is an exception. If a person has forbidden himself a garment, or an article of food, it is meaningless, and one can use it without expiation. But if concerning a wife or a slave-girl he has said: I forbid myself an intercourse with her, she would not become unlawful and forbidden, but one would have to expiate

the oath before going in to her. This is the opinion of the Shafeis. (Mughni al-Muhtaj). And a similar opinion on this question is held by the Malikis. (Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran).

The third group says that to forbid oneself something is by itself an oath even if the words of oath have not been used. This is the opinion of Abu Bakr. Aishah, Umar, Abdullah bin Masud, Zaid bin Thabit and Abdullah bin Abbas. Although from Ibn Abbas another opinion has been reported in Bukhari to the effect: If a man has forbidden himself his wife, it is meaningless, yet it has been interpreted to mean that according to him this is not divorce but an oath which entails an expiation. For, in Bukhari, Muslim and Ibn Majah, another saying of Ibn Abbas has been reported that to forbid oneself one's wife entails an expiation, and in Nasai the tradition is to the effect that when Ibn Abbas was asked his opinion on this, he said: She is not forbidden to you, but you must pay the expiation. And in Ibn Jarir's tradition the words of Ibn Abbas are to the effect: If the people forbid themselves what Allah has made lawful for them, they must expiate their oath. This same is the opinion of Hasan Basri, Ata, Taus, Suleman bin Yasar, Ibn Jubair and Qatadah, and the same has been adopted by the Hanafis. Imam Abu Bakr al- Jassas says: The words of the verse lima tuharrimu do not indicate that the Prophet (peace be upon him) along with forbidding himself the lawful thing had also sworn an oath, therefore, one will have to admit that tahrim (to forbid oneself something) itself is an oath; for after it Allah made obligatory the expiation of the oath in connection with the prohibition. Farther on he writes again: Our companions (i.e. the Hanafis) regard tahrim as an oath in case it is not accompanied by the intention of divorce. If a person forbade upon himself his wife, he in fact said: By God, I will not come near you, thus, he committed ila (act of temporary separation). And if he forbade himself an article of food, etc, he in a way said: By God, I will not use that article. For Allah first said: Why do you forbid that which Allah has made lawful. And then said: Allah has appointed a way to absolve you from your oaths. Thus, Allah has regarded tahrim as an oath, and the word tahrim in its meaning and legal effect becomes synonymous with an oath.

Here, for the benefit of the common man, it would be useful to tell what the legal command is, according to the jurists, in respect of someone forbidding upon himself his wife and the other things besides the wife.

The Hanafis say that if without the intention of divorce somebody forbade upon himself his wife, or swore an oath that he would not have conjugal relations with her, this would be ila (temporary separation), and in this case he would have to expiate his oath before having the sexual relation. But if with the intention of divorce he said: You are unlawful to me, it will have to be ascertained what was his real intention. If his intention was of three divorces, the three divorces will take place, and if the intention was of a lesser number, of one or two divorces, only one divorce will take place in either case. And if somebody says: I have forbidden myself whatever was lawful for me, this would not apply to the wife unless he said these words with the intention of forbidding himself the wife. Apart from the wife, one cannot use the thing he has forbidden upon himself until he has expiated the oath. (Badai as-Sanai: Hedayah; Fath Al-Qadir, al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran).

The Shafeis say that if one forbids upon himself the wife with the intention of divorce or zihar, the intended thing would become effective, whether it is a revocable divorce or an irrevocable divorce or zihar. And if a person used the words of tahrim with the intention of both divorce and zihar, he would be asked to choose one, or the other, for both divorce and zihar cannot be established at one and the same time. Divorce dissolves marriage but in case of zihar it continues and if without any intention the wife is forbidden, she would not become forbidden, but expiation of the oath would become necessary. And if another thing, apart from the wife, is forbidden, it would be meaningless; there is no expiation for it. (Mughni al-Muhtaj).

The Malikis say that if a person forbids upon himself anything other than the wife, it neither becomes forbidden nor entails an expiation. But if he says to the wife: You are unlawful, or unlawful for me, or I am unlawful for you, this would amount to

a triple divorce in any case whether this was said to a wife with whom marriage has been consummated, or to one with whom it has not yet been consummated, unless his intention was of less than three divorces. Asbagh says: If a person says: whatever was lawful for me, is unlawful, the wife also becomes forbidden unless he makes an exception of the wife. In al- Mudawwanah, distinction has been made between the wife with whom marriage has been consummated and the wife with whom it has not been consummated. If one forbids upon himself the former, a threefold divorce will take place irrespective of the intention, but in case of the latter the same number of divorces would take effect as was intended, and if there was no intention of any particular number, it would be considered a triple divorce. (Hashiyah ad- Dusuqi). Qadi Ibn al-Arabi in his Ahkam al-Quran has cited three statements of Imam Malik: (1) That forbidding oneself the wife amounts to an irrevocable divorce. (2) That it amounts to three divorces. (3) That in case of the wife with whom marriage has been consummated it amounts to three divorces, but in case of the one with whom it has not been consummated, to only one divorce if one was intended. Then he says: The correct thing is that forbidding oneself the wife amounts to one divorce only. For if the man uses the word divorce instead of calling her unlawful without specifying the number, only one divorce will take place.

Three different views in this regard have been reported from Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal: (1) That to forbid oneself the wife, or to make a lawful thing absolutely unlawful for oneself, is zihar, whether zihar was intended or not. (2) That this is an express allusion to divorce, and it amounts to pronouncing a triple divorce whether only one divorce was intended. (3) That it is an oath, unless the man had the intention of divorce or zihar and in this case the same would take effect as was intended. Of these only the first one is the best known view among the Hanbalis. (Al-Insaf).

(5) That is, Allah is your Master and Guardian of your affairs. He knows best in what lies your own good, and whatever commands He has given, they are all based on wisdom. The first thing means: You are not independent in this world, but you are servant

of Allah and He is your Master; therefore, none of you possesses any power to alter or change the ways and methods prescribed by Him; the best thing for you is to entrust your affairs to Him and continue to obey Him.

The second thing means that all the methods and laws that Allah has enjoined, are based on knowledge and wisdom. Whatever He has made lawful, has been made lawful on the basis of knowledge and wisdom and whatever He has made unlawful also has been made unlawful on the basis of knowledge and wisdom. Nothing has been made lawful or unlawful at random. Therefore, those who believe in Allah should understand that it is Allah Who is All-Knowing and All-Wise and not they. And their well-being lies only in carrying out duly the commands given by Him.

وَ اِذۡ اَسَرَّ النَّبِیُّ اِلٰی بَعۡضِ اَزۡوَاجِہٖ حَدِیۡثًا فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَتۡ بِہٖ وَ اَظۡہَرَہُ اللّٰہُ عَلَیۡہِ عَرَّفَ بَعۡضَہٗ وَ اَعۡرَضَ عَنۡۢ بَعۡضٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَہَا بِہٖ قَالَتۡ مَنۡ اَنۡۢبَاَکَ ہٰذَا ؕ قَالَ نَبَّاَنِیَ الۡعَلِیۡمُ الۡخَبِیۡرُ ۳ۚ

(66:3) The Prophet confided something to one of his wives and then she disclosed it (to another); so after Allah revealed to the Prophet (that she had disclosed that secret), he made a part of it known to her and passed over a part of it. And when he told her about this (i.e., that she had disclosed the secret entrusted to her), she asked: “Who informed you of this?” He said: “I was told of it by He Who is All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (6)

(6) Different things have been reported in different traditions, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had told such and such a thing to one of his wives in confidence, which she disclosed to another wife. But for us, in the first place, it is not right to investigate it, for it is on the disclosure of a secret that Allah is taking a wife to task, it cannot therefore be right for us to inquire into it and try to uncover it. Secondly, in view of the object for which this verse was sent down, it is not at all important to know what the secret was. Had it any connection with the object of the discourse, Allah would Himself have mentioned it. The real object for which this incident has been related in the Quran is to

warn the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) wives and through them, the wives of the responsible people among the Muslims not to be careless in the matter of guarding secrets. Had it been only a private and personal affair, as is generally the case between the husband and the wife in the world, there was no need that Allah should have directly informed the Prophet (peace be upon him) of it through revelation, and then did not rest content only with giving the information, but should also have recorded it in the Book which the whole world has to recite forever. The reason why it was given such importance was that this wife was not the wife of an ordinary husband but of that illustrious husband, whom Allah had appointed to the office of the highest responsibility, who was locked in an incessant battle with the disbelievers, polytheists and hypocrites at all times and under whose leadership a fierce conflict was going on for establishing Islam in place of paganism. In the house of such an illustrious man there could be countless things which if not kept secret but disclosed before time, could harm the great mission which he was performing. Therefore, when a lady of the house happened to show this weakness for the first time in that she disclosed a secret that had been told her in confidence, to another (a member of her own household), the weakness was immediately pointed out to her, not secretly but openly in the Quran, so as to impart training in the guarding of secrets not only to the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but also to the wives of all responsible people of the Muslim community. In the verse the question whether the secret disclosed pertained to a matter of any consequence or not, and whether its disclosure could cause any harm to the mission or not, has been altogether ignored. What has been disapproved and pointed out in particular is that the secret was disclosed to another. The higher the position of responsibility a person holds the more dangerous would be the leakage of secrets from his house. No matter whether a thing is of any consequence or not, once a person becomes careless in the matter of guarding secrets, he may reveal important things as well as trivial matters.

اِنۡ تَتُوۡبَاۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ فَقَدۡ صَغَتۡ قُلُوۡبُكُمَا وَاِنۡ تَظٰهَرَا عَلَيۡهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ مَوۡلٰهُ وَجِبۡرِيۡلُ وَصَالِحُ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ وَالۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِكَ ظَهِيۡرٌ ۝٤

(66:4) If the two of you turn in repentance to Allah (that is better for you), for the hearts of both of you have swerved from the Straight Path. [7] But if you support one another against the Prophet, [8] then surely Allah is his Protector; and after that Gabriel and all righteous believers and the angels are all his supporters. [9]

(7) The word saghat in the original is from saghy which means to swerve and to become crooked. Shah Waliyullah and Shah Rafiuddin have translated this sentence thus: Crooked have become your hearts. Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Sufyan Thauri and Dahhak have given this meaning of it: Your hearts have swerved from the right path. Imam Razi explains it thus: Your hearts have swerved from what is right, and the right implies the right of the Prophet (peace be upon him). And Allama Alusis commentary is although it is incumbent on you that you should approve what the Messenger (peace be upon him) approves and disapprove what he disapproves, yet in this matter your hearts have swerved from conformity with him and turned in opposition to him.

(8) The word tazahur means to cooperate mutually in opposition to another person, or to be united against another person. Shah Waliyullah has translated this sentence, thus: If you mutually join together to cause distress to the Prophet. Shah Abdul Qadir's translation is: If you both overwhelm him. Ashraf Ali Thanwi's translation says: And if you both continued to work thus against the Prophet. And Shabbir Ahmad Uthmami has explained it thus: If you two continued to work and behave thus (against the Prophet, peace be upon him).

The verse is clearly addressed to two ladies and the context shows that these ladies are from among the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for in (verses 1-5 of this Surah) the affairs concerning the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives only have been discussed continuously, and this becomes obvious from the style of the Quran itself. As for the question who were the wives, and what was the matter which caused Allah's displeasure, the details are found in the Hadith. In Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari,

Muslim, Tirmidhi and Nasai, a detailed tradition of Abdullah bin Abbas has been related, which describes the incident with some variation in wording. Ibn Abbas says:

I had been thinking for long time to ask Umar as to who were the two of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives, who had joined each other against him, and about whom Allah sent down this verse: In tatuba.....; but I could not muster courage because of his awe-inspiring personality until he left for Hajj and I accompanied him. On our way back while helping him to perform ablutions for the Prayer at one place I had an opportunity to ask him this question. He replied: they were Aishah and Hafsah. Then he began to relate the background, saying: We, the people of Quraish, were used to keeping our women folk under strict control. Then, when we came to Al-Madinah, we found that the people here were under the control of their wives, and the women of Quraish too started learning the same thing from them. One day when I became angry with my wife, I was amazed to see that she argued with me. I felt badly about her conduct. She said: Why should you feel so angry at my behavior. By God, the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) answer him back face to face, (the word in the original is li yuraji nahu) and some one of them remains angrily apart from him for the whole day. (According to Bukhari: the Prophet, peace be upon him, remains angry and apart from her the whole day). Hearing this I came out of my house and went to Hafsah (who was Umar's daughter and the Prophet's, peace be upon him, wife). I asked her: Do you answer back to the Prophet (peace be upon him) face to face? She said: Yes. I asked: And does one of you remain apart from him for the whole day, (according to Bukhari: the Holy Prophet remains angry and apart from her for the entire day). She said: Yes. I said: Wretched is the one from among you, who behaves thus. Has one of you become so fearless of this that Allah should afflict her with His wrath because of the wrath of His Prophet (peace be upon him) and she should perish, So, do not be rude to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Here also the words are: la turaji-i, nor demand of him anything, but demand of me whatever you desire. Do not be misled by this that your neighbor (i.e. Aishah) is more beautiful and dearer to the Prophet (peace be upon him). After

this I left her house and went to the house of Umm Salamah, who was related to me, and talked to her on this subject. She said: Son of Khattab, you are a strange man: you have meddled in every matter until you are now interfering in the affair between Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) and his wives. She discouraged me. Then it so happened that an Ansari neighbor came to my house at night and he called out to me. We used to sit in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) assembly by turns and each used to pass on to the other the news of the day of his turn. It was the time when we were apprehending an attack by the Ghassanids any time. On his call when I came out of my house, he said that something of grave significance had happened. I said: Have the Ghassanids launched an attack? He said: No, but something even more serious. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has divorced his wives. I said: Doomed is Hafsah (the words in Bukhari are: Raghima anfu Hafsah wa Aishah). I already had a premonition of this.

We have left out what happened after this, how next morning Umar went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and tried to appease his anger. We have described this incident by combining the traditions of Musnad Ahmad and Bukhari. In this the word murajat which Umar has used cannot be taken in its literal sense, but the context shows that the word has been used in the sense of answering back face to face and Umar's saying to his daughter: La turaji-i Rasul Allah clearly has the meaning: Do not be impudent to the Messenger of Allah.

Some people say that this is a wrong translation, and their objection is: Although it is correct to translate murajaat as answering back, or answering back face to face, yet it is not correct to translate it as being impudent. These objectors do not understand that if a person of a lower rank or position answers back or retorts to a person of a higher rank and position, or answers him back face to face this very thing is described as impudence. For example, if a father rebukes his son for something or feels angry at his behavior, and the son instead of keeping quiet or offering an excuse, answers back promptly, this could only be described as impudence. Then, when the matter is

not between a father and a son, but between the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah and an individual of his community, only a foolish person could say that it was not impudence. Some other people regard this translation of ours as disrespectful, whereas it could be disrespectful in case we had had the boldness to use such words in respect of Hafsah from ourselves. We have only given the correct meaning of the words of Umar, and these words he had used while scolding and reproving his daughter for her error. Describing it as disrespectful would mean that either the father should treat his daughter with due respect and reverence even when scolding and rebuking her or else the translator should render his rebuke and reproof in a way as to make it sound respectful and reverent.

Here, what needs to be considered carefully is that if it was such an ordinary and trivial matter that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) said something to his wives they would retort to Him, why was it given so much importance that in the Quran Allah administered a severe warning directly to the wives themselves? And why did Umar take it as such a grave matter that first he reproved his own daughter, then visited the house of the other wives and asked them to fear the wrath of Allah? And, above all, was the Prophet (peace be upon him) also so sensitive that he would take offense at minor things and become annoyed with his wives, and was he, God forbid, so irritable that once having been annoyed at such things he had severed his connections with all his wives and retired to his private apartment in seclusion? If a person considers these questions deeply, he will inevitably have to adopt one of the two views in the explanation of these verses. Either on account of his excessive concern for reverence for the wives he should not at all mind if a fault is imputed to Allah and His Messenger, or else he should admit in a straightforward way that at that time the attitude and behavior of these wives has actually become so objectionable that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was justified in becoming annoyed over it, and more than that, Allah Himself was justified that He should administer a severe warning to the wives on their unseemly behavior and attitude.

(9) That is, you would only harm yourselves if you upheld and supported each other against the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), for none could succeed against him whose Protector is Allah and who had Gabriel and the angels and all the righteous believers on his side.

عَسٰى رَبُّهٗۤ اِنۡ طَلَّقَكُنَّ اَنۡ يُّبۡدِلَهٗۤ اَزۡوَاجًا خَيۡرًا مِّنۡكُنَّ مُسۡلِمٰتٍ
مُّؤۡمِنٰتٍ قٰنِتٰتٍ تٰٓئِبٰتٍ عٰبِدٰتٍ سٰٓئِحٰتٍ ثَيِّبٰتٍ وَّاَبۡكَارًا ۝۵

(66:5) Maybe if he were to divorce you, your Lord might grant him in exchange wives better than you [10] – those who truly submit to Allah, [11] are full of faith, obedient, [12] disposed to repentance, [13] and given to worship [14] and fasting [15] – both previously wedded ones and virgins.

(10) This shows that the fault did not lie only with Aisha and Hafsah but the other wives also had some share in it. That is why, after them, all the other wives too, have been warned in this verse. No light has been thrown on the nature of the error in the Quran. However, some details are found in the Hadith, which we shall relate below.

In Bukhari, a tradition has been reported from Anas, saying that Umar said: The Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives because of their mutual envies and rivalries had utterly displeased him. At this I said to them: It may well be that if the Prophet (peace be upon him) divorced you, Allah would give him in your place better wives than you. Ibn Abi Hatim has, on the authority of Anas, reported the statement of Umar in these words: I was informed that a discord had been created between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his wives. At this I went to each of them and asked them to refrain from vexing the Prophet (peace be upon him); otherwise Allah would give him in their stead better wives than themselves. So much so that when I went to the last of them (and according to a tradition of Bukhari, to Umm Salamah), she said to me: O Umar, is not the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself enough to admonish his wives? Then why should you come out to counsel them. This made me quiet, and after this Allah sent down this verse.

In Muslim, Abdullah bin Abbas has related that Umar said to him: When the Prophet (peace be upon him) separated himself from his wives, I went to the mosque and found the people worried and upset and playing with pebbles and saying to one another: The Prophet (peace be upon him) has divorced his wives.

After this Umar related his visiting the apartments of Aishah and Hafsah and admonishing them. Then he said: I went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: Why do you feel upset with regard to your wives? If you divorce them, Allah is with you, all the angels and Gabriel and Michael are with you, and I and Abu Bakr and all the believers are with you. I thank Allah that seldom has it so happened that I said a thing and did not have hope from Allah that He would testify to what I said. So, after this these verses of Surah At-Tahrim were sent down. Then I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Have you divorced your wives? He said: No. Thereupon I stood at the entrance of the Mosque and announced in a loud voice: The Prophet has not divorced his wives.

The traditions related in Bukhari from Anas and in Musnad Ahmad from Abdullah bin Abbas, Aishah and Abu Hurairah say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had pledged to remain away from his wives for a month and he retired in seclusion to his apartment. When 29 days passed, Gabriel came and said: You have fulfilled your oath: a month has come to completion. Hafiz Badruddin Aini in Umdat al-Qari has related this on the authority of Aishah: The wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) had become divided into two parties. One party consisted of Aishah herself and Hafsah, Saudah and Safiyyah, and the other of Zainab, Umm Salamah and the rest of the wives. These traditions indicate to some extent the conditions that existed in the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) domestic life at that time, which made it necessary that Allah Almighty should intervene and reform the attitude of the wives. Although the wives were the best ladies of society, yet they were human beings and were not free from human weaknesses. Sometimes, when it became difficult for them to lead a life of continuous poverty and hardship, they would become restive, impatient and would start pressing the Prophet (peace be upon him) for better maintenance. At this Allah sent down (verses 28-29 of Surah Al-Ahzab) and admonished them to the effect: If you seek the world and its adornments, our Messenger will give you of these and send you of in a good way. But if you seek Allah and His Messenger and the Hereafter, you should bear up against the hardships with patience, which you

might have to face when living with the Messenger. (For details, see(E.N. 41 of Surah Al-Ahzab) and the introduction to it). Then on account of the feminine nature they sometimes happened to behave in a way, which though not unusual in everyday human life, did not go well with the unique dignity and great responsibilities of the house to which Allah had given them the honor to belong. So, when it was apprehended that those things might embitter the Prophet's domestic life and might even adversely affect the great mission that Allah had entrusted to him, He sent down this verse in the Quran, and reformed them so that the wives may realize the responsibilities of the position and rank which they had attained as the life-companions of the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, and should not regard themselves as ordinary women and their household as a common household. The very first sentence of this verse was such as might have caused their hearts to shudder. There could be no severer warning for them than this: It may well be that if the Prophet (peace be upon him) divorces all of you, Allah will give him in your place better wives than yourselves. In the first place, even the thought of being divorced by the Prophet (peace be upon him) was unbearable for them: more than that, this would deprive them of the honor of being mothers of the believers, and the other women whom Allah would give as wives to the Prophet (peace be upon him) would be better than them, After this it was no longer possible for the wives to behave in a way as would have occasioned a reproof from Allah. That is why we find only two places in the Quran where these selected and distinguished ladies have been administered a warning, in Surah Al-Ahzab and here in Surah At-Tahrim.

(11) In the places where the words Muslim and momin have been used together, Muslim means the one who carries out Ddivine commands practically, and momin the one who believes sincerely and truly. Thus, the foremost quality of the best Muslim wives is that they should be believing in Allah and His Messenger and His religion (deen) sincerely and also practically following Allah's religion in their morals, habits, customs and conduct.

(12) Obedient has two meanings and both are implied here.

(1) They are obedient to Allah and His Messenger.
(2) They are obedient to their husbands.

(13) The word when used as attribute of a man does not imply the one who offers repentance only once but the one who continues to implore Allah again and again for the forgiveness of his mistakes, whose conscience is alive and active, who is always aware of his weaknesses and errors and is penitent for them. Such a person never feels proud, arrogant and conceited, but is gentle and clement by nature.

(14) A worshiper can never be so heedless of God as a non-worshiper. This also helps much in making a woman a good wife. Being devout she adheres to the bounds set by Allah, recognizes and discharges the rights of others and keeps her faith fresh and alive at all times. Because of these qualities she can better be expected that she would not reject obedience to divine commands.

(15) The word saihat in the original has been interpreted by several companions and large number of their successors to mean the same as saimat (those given to fasting). The reason why the word siyahat journeying has been used for fasting is that in the ancient times journeys were mostly undertaken by the monks and ascetics, who had no provisions and had to go without food till they got something to eat from somewhere. On that account fasting also is a kind of asceticism, for a faster has to remain hungry until the time of breaking the fast. Ibn Jarir in his commentary of (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 12) has cited a saying of Aishah, saying: The journeying (i.e. asceticism) of the Ummah is fasting. Here, making mention of fasting as an attribute of the pious wives does not mean that they observe the obligatory fasting month of Ramadan only but that they observe voluntary fasts also besides the obligatory fasts.

Addressing the wives Allah's saying: If the Messenger (peace be upon him) divorces all of you, Allah will give him in your place better wives who will have this quality does not mean that the wives were not virtuous, but it means; Give up your wrong

conduct which is causing so much distress to the Prophet (peace be upon him); instead, pay attention to developing in yourselves these noble qualities to the highest degree.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا وَّقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَّا يَعْصُوْنَ اللّٰهَ مَآ اَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ ۝

(66:6) Believers, guard yourselves and your kindred against a Fire whose fuel is human beings and stones, [16] a Fire held in the charge of fierce and stern angels who never disobey what He has commanded them, and always do what they are bidden. [17]

(16) This verse tells that a person's responsibility is not confined to making effort to save himself from the punishment of God but it is also his responsibility that he should so educate and also train to the best of his ability members of his family to become Allah's favorite servants, who have been entrusted to his care in the natural process of life; and if they might be following a path to Hell, he should try, as much as he can, to correct them. His concern should not only be that his children should lead a happy and prosperous life in the world but, more than that, he should be anxious to see that they do not become fuel of Hell in the Hereafter. According to a tradition reported in Bukhari by Abdullah bin Umar, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Each one of you is a herdsman and is accountable with regard to his herd. The ruler is a herdsman and is accountable with regard to his subjects. The man is a herdsman of his family and is accountable with regard to them. And the woman is a herdsman of her husband's house and his children and is accountable with regard to them.

"Whose fuel...stone' probably implies coal. Ibn Masud, Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Suddi say that this will be brimstone.

(17) That is, they will enforce on every culprit precisely the same punishment which they will be

commanded to enforce on him without making any alteration in it, or showing any pity for him.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ ۭ اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝٧

(66:7) (It will then be said): “Unbelievers, make no excuses today. You are being recompensed for nothing else but your deeds.” (18)

(18) The style of both these verses contains a severe warning for the Muslims. In the first verse the Muslims have been addressed and told that they should save themselves and their households from the dreadful punishment. In the second that this will be said to the disbelievers while subjecting them to punishment in Hell. This by itself gives the meaning that the Muslims in the world should avoid adopting that conduct and behavior in consequence of which they may have to meet with the fate as the disbelievers in the Hereafter.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوْحًا ۭ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللّٰهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ ۚ نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۸

(66:8) Believers, turn to Allah in sincere repentance; (19) maybe your Lord will expunge your evil deeds and admit you to the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. (20) This will be on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who have embraced faith and are with him; (21) their light will be running before them and on their right hands, and they will say: “Our Lord, perfect for us our light and forgive us. Surely You have power over everything.” (22)

(19) Literally, taubat an-nasuh-an may either mean that one should offer such true repentance as may have no tinge of pretense and hypocrisy in it, or that one should wish his own self well and repenting of sin should save oneself from the evil end, or that one should so adorn and improve his life after repentance as to become a cause of admonition for others, and seeing his example others also also reform themselves accordingly. These are the meanings of taubat an-nasuh which are indicated by its literal sense. As for its religious meaning, its explanation is found in the Hadith which Ibn Abi Hatim has related on the authority of Zirr bin Hubaish. He says: When I asked Ubayy bin Kaab the meaning of taubat an-nasuh, he said that he had asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) the same question, and he had replied: It implies that when you happen to commit an error, you should feel penitent for it, then should implore Allah for forgiveness remorsefully, and then should refrain from committing the same error again. This same meaning has been reported from Umar, Abdullah bin Masud and Abdullah bin Abbas also, and in a tradition Umar has defined taubat an-nasuh, thus: After offering repentance one should not even think of committing the sin, not to speak of repeating it. (Ibn Jarir). Ali once heard a desert Arab chanting the words of repentance and forgiveness quickly and mechanically and remarked: This is the repentance of the liars. The man asked: What is true repentance? Ali replied: It should be accompanied by six things (1) You should feel penitent

for the wrong you have done. (2) You should carry out the duties that you have ignored. (3) Restore the rights that you have usurped. (4) Ask forgiveness of him whom you have wronged. (5) Make a resolve not to repeat the sin again. (6) Consume yourself in obedience to Allah as you have so far been consuming it in wrongdoing, and cause it to taste the bitterness of obedience as you have so far been causing it to enjoy the sweet taste of disobedience and sin. (Al- Kashshaf).

In connection with repentance there are also some other points which should be well understood. (1) That repentance, in fact, is to show remorse for an act of disobedience only because it is a disobedience of Allah. Otherwise to make a resolve to refrain from a sin because it is harmful for health, for instance, or it is likely to cause defamation or financial loss, is no repentance. (2) That man should offer repentance as soon as he realizes that he has committed disobedience of Allah and should compensate for it without delay in whatever form possible and should not defer it in any way. (3) That violating one's repentance again and making a jest of repentance and repeating the sin again and again of which one has repented, is a proof of the falsity of one's repentance. For the essence of repentance is penitence, and breaking his repentance repeatedly is a sign that it has not been motivated by penitence. (4) that if the person who has repented sincerely and resolved not to repeat the sin again, happens to repeat it once again because of human weakness, it will not revive his past sin. However, he should offer a fresh repentance for the latter sin and should resolve more firmly that he would not commit the sin in future. (5) That it is not necessary to renew one's repentance again every time one remembers the disobedience committed in the past, but if one's self derives pleasure from the remembrance of the past, sinful life, one should offer repentance again and again until the remembrance of the sins causes remorse instead of pleasure and enjoyment. For the person who has actually repented of disobedience because of fear of God cannot derive pleasure from the thought that he has been disobeying God. His deriving pleasure from it is a sign that fear of God has not taken root in his heart.

(20) The words of the verse deserve deep consideration. It has not been said that if you repeat, you will surely be forgiven and will certainly be admitted to Paradise, but that: If you offer true repentance, it may well be that Allah will treat you kindly. It means that it is not incumbent upon Allah to accept the repentance of the sinner and to grant him Paradise instead of subjecting him to punishment but it will be His kindness and compassion that He may forgive well as reward His servant. One should have hope of His forgiveness, but one should not commit a sin with the confidence that he will achieve forgiveness by repentance.

(21) That is, He will not allow the reward of their good deeds to go to waste. He will not let the disbelievers and the hypocrites taunt the believers that they had gained nothing in spite of their worship. Humiliation will be the fate of the rebels and the disobedient and not of the faithful and obedient.

(22) When this verse is read along with (verses 12-13 of Surah Al-Hadid), it becomes clear that the running of the light before the believers will take place when they will be proceeding towards Paradise from the Plain of Resurrection. There it will be pitch dark all around and those who will have been condemned to Hell, will be groping about in it. The light will only be with the believers by which they will be traveling on their way. On this critical occasion, hearing the wailings and groaning of those groping in the dark the believers will be feeling terror stricken. In view of their past errors and shortcomings they will be afraid lest they too should be deprived of their light and made to grope about like those wretched people. Therefore, they will pray: O our Lord, forgive us our sins and let our light remain with us until we reach Paradise. Ibn Jarir has cited Abdullah bin Abbas as explaining the meaning of Rabbana-atimim lava nurana thus: They will implore Allah Almighty that their light be allowed to remain with them and kept from going out until they have crossed the bridge across Hell. The commentary given by Hasan Basri, Mujahid and Dahhak is also almost the same. Ibn Kathir has cited theirs this saying: When the believers see that the hypocrites have been deprived of the light,

they will pray to Allah for the perfection of their light. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 17 of Surah Al-Hadid).

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۭ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ۝

(66:9) O Prophet, strive against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be severe with them. (23) Hell shall be their resort. What a grievous end!

(23) For explanation see (E. N. 82 of Surah At-Taubah).

ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا امْرَاَتَ نُوْحٍ وَّامْرَاَتَ لُوْطٍ ۭ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتٰهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـــًٔا وَّقِيْلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدّٰخِلِيْنَ ۝١٠

(66:10) Allah has set forth for the unbelievers the parable of the wives of Noah and Lot. They were wedded to two of Our righteous servants, but each acted treacherously with her husband, (24) and their husbands could be of no avail to them against Allah. The two of them were told: “Enter the Fire with all the others who enter it.”

(24) This betrayal was not in the sense that they had committed an indecency but in the sense that they did not follow the Prophets Noah and Lot (peace be upon them) on the way of faith but sided with their enemies against them. Ibn Abbas say: No Prophet’s wife has ever been wicked and immoral. The betrayal of these two women in fact was in the matter of faith and religion. They did not acknowledge the religion of the Prophets Noah and Lot (peace be upon them). The Prophet Noah’s wife used to convey news about the believers to the wicked of her people, and the Prophet Lot’s wife used to inform the immoral people about those who visited him in his house. (Ibn Jarir).

وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا امْرَاَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۘ اِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِيْ عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِيْ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهٖ وَنَجِّنِيْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝١١

(66:11) Allah has set forth for the believers the parable of Pharaoh's wife. She prayed: “My Lord, build for me a house with You in Paradise and deliver me from Pharaoh and his misdeeds; (25) and deliver me from the iniquitous people.”

(25) From Pharaoh and his work: from the evil end that Pharaoh would meet in consequence of his evil deeds.

وَ مَرۡيَمَ ابۡنَتَ عِمۡرٰنَ الَّتِىۡۤ اَحۡصَنَتۡ فَرۡجَهَا فَنَفَخۡنَا فِيۡهِ مِنۡ رُّوۡحِنَا وَ صَدَّقَتۡ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَ كُتُبِهٖ وَ كَانَتۡ مِنَ الۡقٰنِتِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾

(66:12) Allah has also set forth the parable of Mary, the daughter of Imran, (26) who guarded her chastity, (27) and into whom We breathed of Our Spirit, (28) and who testified to the words of her Lord and His Books. She was among the obedient. (29)

(26) It may be that the name of Mary’s father was Imran, or she may have been called daughter of Imran because she belonged to the family of Imran.

(27) This is a refutation of the accusation by the Jews that the birth of Jesus was, God forbid, the result of a sin of his mother. Their same accusation has been called a monstrous calumny in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 156). (For explanation, see (E.N. 190 of Surah An-Nisa).

(28) That is, without her having any connection with a man, Allah breathed into her womb a Spirit from Himself. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 212, 213 of Surah An-Nisa) and (E.N. 89 of Surah Al-Anbiya).

(29) For the explanation of the object for which these three kinds of women have been cited as an example, see the Introduction to the Surah.